

JJD Twomey  
8 February 2012  
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**IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF JOHN JOSEPH DONALD TWOMEY**

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I, **JOHN JOSEPH DONALD TWOMEY**, Crime Reporter of the Daily Express, of The Northern and Shell Building, Number 10 Lower Thames Street, London, EC3R 6EN, **WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:**

- A. I am the Crime Reporter of The Daily Express. I make this statement in response to a request of the Leveson Inquiry (the "Inquiry") pursuant to a letter to the solicitors for Northern & Shell dated 3 January 2012.
- B. I confirm that all matters in this statement are true and, unless I specify to the contrary, are based upon my own knowledge and a review of the relevant documents. Where matters are not within my own knowledge, I state the source and believe the same to be true.
- C. For convenience, I have reproduced as subheadings the questions asked of me in the 3 January letter.

**Who you are and a brief summary of your career history in the media.**

1. I started my newspaper career aged 19 on the South London Press in September 1979. I was first employed as a general news reporter and was appointed crime reporter in 1983. From May 1987 until July 1987 I was a crime reporter on the London Daily News and held the same position on the

Sunday People from July 1987 until September 1987. Since October 1987, I have been the crime reporter at the Daily Express.

2. From 2009, I have been the Chairman of the Crime Reporters Association ("CRA"). I comment on the CRA at the end of this statement.

### **Relations between the Media and the Metropolitan Police**

*What have been your impressions, over the years, about the culture of relations between the Metropolitan Police Service and the media?*

3. When I first became a crime reporter in 1983, the culture of media relations with the Metropolitan Police Service ["MPS"] was firmly rooted in the work of the Criminal Investigation Department ["CID"]. Then, as now, there was an almost insatiable demand for news about detectives and the criminals they investigated. At that time, it seemed to me the reputation of Scotland Yard was largely borne by these squads. Success for them meant that the MPS was still regarded as a success, despite any of its perceived failings. In those days, there was a real distinction between the CID and the uniformed branches of the police service.
4. When I moved to the Daily Express in 1987, most national daily newspapers and the London Evening Standard had two dedicated crime reporters. Broadly speaking, they acted as cheerleaders for the police in general and Scotland Yard in particular. However bad the publicity may have been elsewhere, the MPS could normally rely on uncritical coverage from daily paper crime reporters.
5. In those days, the MPS as an organisation never sought to exercise much control over the relationship between detectives and crime reporters. Press officers often actively encouraged senior detectives to deal directly with trusted crime reporters. The nature and timing of information from detective to crime reporter was a matter for the officer's discretion.

6. Commissioners “did the rounds” of national newspapers to meet editors and senior journalists but I don't believe those relationships were considered very important at the time. By the end of the following decade, the picture was radically different. Changes in the CID, the way it operated, and disclosure rules; miscarriages of justice such as the Birmingham Six case; the rise of the press office, and the desire to nurture a strong corporate image; and, notably, the Stephen Lawrence case, all played a part in transforming relations between police and media.
7. Following a series of miscarriages of justice, crime reporters were more likely to write stories that questioned the police or were outwardly critical. During the 1990s, press officers began to exercise more control over detectives' dealings with the media. This was partly due to a desire to nurture a strong corporate image and partly due to making sure disclosure rules were complied with.
8. Media guidelines were issued to police, warning officers that they could face disciplinary action if they spoke too freely. In practice, less information was passed to reporters both formally and informally.
9. Detectives in supervising ranks often spent a lot more time in the uniformed branch before moving to the CID on an “interchange” system. Generally speaking, this new generation of CID officer was less keen to develop professional relationships with reporters.
10. Failures over the initial investigation into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, and public acknowledgement of institutional racism and incompetence, had a significant and lasting impact on MPS.
11. Looking back, it appears to me that the publication of the *MacPherson Report* in 1999, prompted a shift in the MPS' media strategy. Against the background of corrosive publicity, more meaningful relationships were actively sought with newspaper editors. Relationships with crime reporters, and other

specialist journalists who covered police matters, were still important but not vital. The MPS sought to influence coverage of its affairs from editor level.

12. Since 1999, the MPS, and other forces, has been very much more concerned with its corporate image. The central feature is the idea of a highly professional organisation policing with the consent of all sections of the community. Press offices are naturally concerned with maintaining it, partly through a stricter control of information passed to the media.

***Describe the personal contact which you had with the Metropolitan Police at the various stages of your career. The Inquiry would like an overall picture of the type, frequency, duration and content of your contact.***

13. From the start of my career as a local paper crime reporter in 1983, the only way to succeed was to get to know as many detectives as possible. The first contact was often through police calls - visiting police stations on a particular day or ringing CID inspectors to find out what crimes had been reported in the past few days. Detectives in charge were keen to meet the reporters who wrote about their inquiries, publicised their appeals and recorded their court cases.
14. Apart from police calls and regular meetings with CID officers, other important ports of call were the Press Bureau at Scotland Yard and Area Press Officers ["APOs"] covering your district.
15. Once established as a journalist who could be trusted, it was not unusual for APOs to encourage crime reporters to deal directly with detectives, to meet them socially and get to know them. I would meet CID officers once or twice, or sometimes, three times a week. The same pattern continued when I moved to the Daily Express in 1987. The officers I mixed with mostly were ranked from detective sergeant to detective chief superintendent. I rarely had dealings with more senior officers.

***Without prejudice to the generality of question (3) above, please set out the contact which you have had with the person occupying at any given time the following posts giving, as best you can remember, the dates and summarising the gist of the communications which you had with:***

- a. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.*
- b. The Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.*
- c. Assistant Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis*
- d. Deputy Assistant Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis*
- e. Head of Public Affairs.*

*In each case, who initiated the contact, and why?*

16. In relation to (a) since 1987 there have been six MPS Commissioners. I attended lunches at the Daily Express offices in Fleet Street or Blackfriars when Sir Peter (now Lord) Imbert, and Sir Paul (now Lord) Condon were guests. A senior press officer was always present.
17. I cannot now remember any of the conversation at these lunches but it would have been about general policing issues of the day. I do recall that both Commissioners were very guarded in what they said - even though the normal rule for functions of this kind was that they were off-the-record, non-reportable events.
18. As far as I can recall, neither Sir John (now Lord) Stevens, Sir Ian (now Lord) Blair, Sir Paul Stephenson nor the current MPS Commissioner have ever attended lunches at the Daily Express. I have met Lord Stevens, Lord Blair, Sir Paul and Bernard Hogan-Howe at various social functions over the years.
19. MPS Commissioners have had more formal contact with crime reporters at monthly CRA briefings. These meetings almost invariably start with opening remarks by the Commissioner, questions arising and then more general questions. These meetings take place at New Scotland Yard ["NSY"] and are arranged by the press office. They are always on-the-record and press officers are always present. Commissioners are briefed beforehand and avoid saying anything which may appear controversial.
20. In relation to (b), over the years, I have had little contact with Deputy Commissioners.
21. In relation to (c), apart from formal briefings and press conferences at NSY, I have met Assistant Commissioners occasionally at social functions.

Assistant Commissioners have been guests at CRA lunches organised through the press office. Press officers always attended. The talk at these lunches was non-reportable and was always very general. Two, three or perhaps four different CRA members were present each time. The press office believed it would be beneficial to both sides for the officers to meet as many CRA members as possible. Since the resignations of last summer, CRA lunches with senior officers have ceased.

22. In relation to (d), the same applies with Deputy Assistant Commissioners have attended non-reportable CRA lunches similar to those described above. They were always accompanied by a press officer. The talk was very general.
23. In relation to (e), I have met Dick Fedorcio, Director of Public Affairs, frequently both at NSY and socially. As a crime reporter and CRA chairman, it makes good sense to have a good, working relationship with the head of public affairs at NSY. I had less contact with his predecessors. As far as I can recall, they were less approachable and left most contact with crime reporters to senior press officers.

***Did you ever have the personal mobile telephone number or home telephone number of the people listed at a-e above?***

24. I have had the mobile phone numbers of Assistant Commissioners and Deputy Assistant Commissioners in the past although I cannot remember if the officers gave me their numbers or whether I got them from other reporters. I never had the mobiles or home phone numbers of Commissioners. I speak to Dick Fedorcio regularly by phone both mobile and office. As I stated above, it is important for me to have a good relationship with the Yard's head of public affairs. I can only recall speaking to him once on his home phone.

***Describe what you were seeking to gain from the Metropolitan Police through your personal contacts with MPS personnel.***

25. As a crime reporter, contacts within the Metropolitan Police are essential. I could not do my job without them. What I want from them is information for

stories to be published the next day or sometime in the near future, for example, at the conclusion of a trial.

***Describe in general terms and using illustrative examples what you consider the Metropolitan Police has been seeking from you in personal dealings with them during your career.***

26. By briefing crime reporters who already have a general knowledge of the way the police operate they hope to secure informed and sympathetic coverage. By meeting from time to time, they have sought to build up a friendly, professional relationship built on trust. It is difficult to think of illustrative examples.

***To what extent do you accept, and have you accepted, hospitality from the Metropolitan Police?***

27. I have accepted hospitality from the Metropolitan Police several times since I became a crime reporter for the Daily Express in 1987.

***Insofar as you accept, or have accepted, hospitality from the MPS, what is, or was, the nature of the hospitality that you accept, or have accepted?***

28. I remember being invited to one lunch and, I think, three dinners at NSY. I have attended several drinks parties at NSY or at the Empress State police offices, Earls Court, over the years.

***To what extent do you, or have you, provided hospitality for the Metropolitan Police?***

29. I have provided hospitality for MPS officers on numerous occasions over the past 28 years.

***Insofar as you provide, or have provided hospitality to the Metropolitan Police, what is, or was, the nature of the hospitality that you provide, or have provided?***

30. This would be drinks in pubs and wine bars, lunches and dinners. The choice of restaurant depends on the rank of the officer involved. Most senior officers will wish to meet in less public and more expensive restaurants.

*Have you ever attended a formal press conference called by the MPS? If so, for what purpose was it called and do you think that it was valuable?*

31. Since 1983, I have attended hundreds of press conferences given by the MPS. Generally speaking, they fall into four categories; (i) appeals for information following major crimes, (ii) pre-trial or pre-verdict briefings, (iii) press conferences after major operations and (iv) CRA briefings.
32. The value of witness appeals depends on how much information the police are prepared to disclose. Pre-trial briefings are sometimes useful if there is a complicated narrative surrounding the case. But as nothing that has not been put before the jury can be reported during the case, the value of pre-trial briefings is limited. Very little information is disclosed at these briefings. Pre-verdict briefings are more useful. Reporters can be reminded of the central narrative and chronology of a case, fresh light can be shed on important aspects of the investigation, the lifestyles of major criminals exposed and the roles played by junior detectives or forensic scientists revealed in greater detail. All this makes for more informed and compelling background stories when the case is over.
33. All information at pre-trial and pre-verdict briefings is disclosed under embargo and in agreement with the Crown Prosecution Service. Reporters undertake only to publish or broadcast material after all defendants are found guilty of all charges.
34. Press conferences are sometimes held after major operations such as raids to arrest organised crime suspects. Officers explain the background to the operation, reveal number of arrests, age and gender of suspects, amount of cash, guns, drugs etc seized and other details. Newspaper photographers and TV cameramen often accompany officers on these raids at the police's invitation. These briefings are very useful and almost always result in good publicity for the police.

35. Regular CRA briefings are important as Commissioners can be put on the spot about major issues. It would be a backward step if CRA briefings were discontinued.

### **Relations with Other Police Forces**

***What have been your impressions, over the years, about the culture of relations between police forces other than the MPS and the media?***

36. My impression of media relations with other forces is that it has largely followed the same pattern as with the Metropolitan Police. Press officers now seek to control all information which is passed to the media and are keen to maintain a strong corporate image.

***Have you had personal contact at Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable, or Assistant Chief Constable level? If so, as best you can remember, please state the dates and summarise the gist of such communications.***

***Describe the personal contact which you had with other police forces at the various stages of your career. The Inquiry would like an overall picture of the type, frequency, duration and content of your contact with other police forces.***

37. I will answer the questions above together. I have had personal contact with Chief Constables, Deputy Chief Constables and Assistant Chief Constables over the years but not on the scale of my dealings with the Metropolitan Police. I have met several at informal social events, such as the City of London Police annual media drinks party and at conferences of the Association of Chief Police Officers. All these meetings were non-reportable, "get to know you" events. As far as I can remember, press officers are always present at these meetings.

38. My contact with other forces over the years has been fairly limited. National newspaper crime reporters tend to be very London-centric.

***Describe what you were seeking to gain from these contacts with other police forces.***

39. I was hoping to gain information regarding ongoing police investigations. Obtaining information is vital for crime reporters and contacts are essential.

***Describe in general terms and using illustrative examples what you consider that other police forces have been seeking from you in personal dealings with them during your career.***

40. As with the Metropolitan Police, other forces like to meet journalists who write about them and their activities. By getting to know crime reporters police forces seek to ensure the coverage is fair, informed, and reflects their corporate image. In general, police forces outside London make no effort to meet London-based crime reporters and prefer to deal with district reporters of national newspapers, local news agencies, local papers and broadcast outlets.

***To what extent do you accept, and have accepted, hospitality from other police forces?***

***Insofar as you accept, or have accepted, hospitality from the other police forces, what is, or was, the nature of the hospitality that you accept, or have accepted?***

41. I will answer the questions above together. As described above, I have attended drinks parties hosted by the City of London Police on a few occasions. I remember being a guest at a dinner given by ACPO following one of their conferences.

***To what extent do you, or have you, provided hospitality for other police forces or any of their personnel?***

***Insofar as you provide, or have provided hospitality to other police forces, or any of their personnel, what is, or was, the nature of the hospitality that you provide, or have provided?***

42. I will answer the above questions together. I have bought drinks and lunches for officers from other forces over the years but these meetings are not as frequent as with MPS officers.

## **General Matters**

***Have the police either formally or informally ever given you prior notification about proposed arrests, raids or other action? If so, please elaborate.***

43. I have been informed of proposed raids and arrest operations several times by the Metropolitan Police over the years. This was done formally through the press office and was followed by a media briefing along the lines of those described above. As far as I can recall, I have never been informally advised about arrests or raids before they have taken place.

***Have you ever been offered "off the record" briefings by the police? If so, please elaborate.***

44. I have attended many non-attributable, off the record and non-reportable briefings as described above. Non-attributable briefings are important ways of dealing with journalists. Officers can speak more freely and put sensitive matters into context if they know they are not going to be named.
45. "Off-the-record" or non-attributable briefings can greatly assist the police in dispelling false rumours that might increase the danger of public disorder or have a lasting impact on police/community relations if they are left uncorrected. Senior officers have a range of factors in mind when deciding if a briefing should be off-the-record, wholly or in part - community/political sensitivities, the impact on victims and their families etc. In many circumstances, the decision has to be made quickly and an "off-the-record" briefing is often seen as the only way forward.
46. Pre-verdict briefings involving terrorist or organised suspects pose difficulties for operational detectives and they are quoted as "police sources" to protect their identities. Middle-ranking detectives sometimes wish to be quoted as "police sources" so it does not appear they are trying to steal the credit for the success of an operation or prosecution from their junior colleagues.

***What mechanisms, if any, are in place in your workplace to monitor and record hospitality as between the police on the one hand and you, or your fellow journalists on the other?***

47. There are no formal mechanisms at the Daily Express to monitor hospitality extended by journalists to the police.

***What training, guidance, policies, and/or practices are in place in your workplace governing contact between you and your fellow journalists on the one hand the police on the other?***

48. There is no such training, guidance, policies or practices.

***What editorial or management oversight, or control, if any, is there over communications between journalists and police at your media outlet?***

49. Management at the Daily Express does not seek to exercise any control over dealings between journalists and the police.

***What ethical issues do you consider arise, or need to be held in mind, by a journalist communicating in the course of his or her employment with the police, or anyone serving with, or employed by, a police force?***

50. Police forces, especially the MPS, are very powerful. Reporters should not be persuaded by personal contacts to ignore or "bury" unfavourable stories. There should be no "trade-offs" - accepting an exclusive story in return for not running a critical one. I have no personal experience of this. The MPS and other forces often try to identify reporters' sources of information. Reporters have a duty to protect their sources as set down in the Society of Editors Code of Practice.

***What payments (if any) are considered to be legitimate financial transactions between persons serving with or employed by a police force and journalists at your media outlet? Please explain.***

51. No payment to the police or police staff can be legitimate or lawful.

***What role do you consider that the Metropolitan Police Service Directorate of Public Affairs (especially its Press Bureau) and corresponding parts of other police forces fulfill? What, in practice, do they do?***

52. Press offices carry out a range of roles including:

- a. Releasing details of major incidents and witness appeals
- b. Providing up-dates on investigations – arrests, suspects released on police bail, charges etc
- c. Announcing major anti-crime initiatives

- d. Publicising warnings about a renewed threat of terrorism and other alerts
  - e. Giving background guidance to journalists.
  - f. Releasing quotes from investigating officers and victims following court cases
53. Press offices, and especially the MPS press bureau, are an important first port-of-call for journalists seeking information on major incidents or requesting updates on important investigations, asking for interviews with senior officers.
54. Seeking guidance from press offices is very much a hit-and-miss exercise. Guidance is now given less often than in the past and is less helpful when it is given. Guidance on politically-sensitive or high profile investigations is rare or non-existent. Police press offices are normally not permitted to give much meaningful guidance on anti-terrorist matters. That role is left to Home Office officials.

***How, in practice, do you get access to the police?***

55. Contact with the police can be made in a number of ways, via the press office, meeting officers at court or at briefings, being introduced by officers you already know.

***Does the Head of Public Affairs at the Metropolitan Police Service and/or corresponding persons in other police forces act, or seek to act as gatekeepers controlling access by the media to other police personnel?***

56. It is part of the job of the Head of Public Affairs at the MPS and his opposite numbers in other forces to control access to senior officers and be present when they meet journalists.

***If so, what is your attitude to this state of affairs?***

57. This is a fact of life and one of the reasons why it is important for crime reporters to be on good terms with Heads of Public Affairs.

***To what extent, in your opinion, does the MPS' Press Bureau, and corresponding parts of other police forces, exist to manage the relevant police force's corporate image in the media?***

58. The MPS Press Bureau plays a central role in managing and maintaining the MPS corporate image as do police press offices across the country. Statements from the MPS and other forces often bear a corporate "stamp" – stock phrases which reflect core values are often repeated whether they are strictly relevant or not.

***Is it necessary for police forces to have a press office, and what is your view as to the utility and role of police press offices?***

59. The huge volume of media inquiries about police matters makes it absolutely essential for forces to have press offices. Their role is largely set out in paragraphs 51 - 53.

***Is it common for persons working for police press offices to have a background in the media?***

60. It is common for press officers to have worked in the media in the past. Many have worked on local newspapers or news agencies. Some have spent time on national newspapers.

***What proportion of personnel working in police press offices do you estimate have a media background?***

61. Probably more than half have spent time in the media.

***Is any particular form of media background predominantly found amongst police press officers (e.g. tabloid, broadsheet, television)?***

62. My impression is that most press officers who have worked in the media probably spent some time on local newspapers or news agencies.

***To the best of your knowledge is there any discernible pattern in the movement of personnel from the media into police press offices and vice versa?***

63. If there is a discernible pattern then it would be a movement from local papers into police press offices. I can only think of one example over the past 29 years of someone moving from the MPS press bureau to a national newspaper.

## **About HMIC**

***What is your view of the recommendations contained in the HMIC's recent report "Without Fear or Favour" insofar as they concern relations between the media and the police? (If you have not seen it, the report is available online).***

64. The major impact on police/media relations is the recommendation that all officers must make a note of their contact with reporters and submit all such notes to a monitoring and audit system. The underlying assumption seems to be that police officers, of whatever rank and experience, cannot be trusted in their dealings with the media.
65. Most officers are likely to give journalists a wide berth if this recommendation is introduced. It simply will not be worth their while to meet reporters. If they are on good terms with journalists already, they are likely to drastically reduce or cease contact altogether if means they might suspected of having inappropriate relationships or favouring representatives of a particular media outlet. Being friendly with journalists will be seen as a bad career move and a potential block on promotion or transfer to a specialist CID unit.
66. Public servants should be able to deal with journalists without fear that they are placing themselves under suspicion and potentially harming their careers. A ban on accepting hospitality is suggested by the HMIC and positively encouraged in the report for the MPS by Elizabeth Filkin published in January this year. Once again, the assumption is that officers cannot be trusted.
67. Meeting over a few drinks at lunch or dinner is a mature and civilised way of making and maintaining contacts with journalists. It is unlikely that the Army or Navy will require senior officers only to meet defence correspondents in

coffee shops or drink water at lunch. Political reporters will still socialise with MPs and senior civil servants in restaurants and bars.

68. Making notes of media contact and a ban on accepting hospitality are also likely to apply to press officers. Their job will be made infinitely more difficult if personal contact with reporters is regarded as inappropriate and positively discouraged. The public will realise they are somehow being short-changed and the police will seem less open, less trustworthy and less accountable.

***Do you consider that there are further or different steps which could and/or should be taken to ensure that relationships between the police and the media are and remain appropriate? Please explain when answering this question what you consider to be appropriate contact between the police and journalists in a democratic society.***

69. Should the recommendations of the HMIC and Filkin reports be introduced, it is very likely to result in less information coming from the MPS. Information that is released will come via official channels – a press office dedicated to manage and sustain the MPS' corporate image, to play down its faults and failings or deny such faults exist.
70. Senior MPS officers have recently spoken of their desire to "control the media" and "control the flow of information to the media". This is dangerous territory for society. Reporters have a key part in promoting police successes and the public gets what it clearly wants – compelling stories about crime and criminals and the detectives who bring them to justice.
71. But journalists also play a vital role in highlighting the shortcomings of the police. It is perhaps worth noting that the MPS was in almost complete denial about its failures in the Stephen Lawrence investigation up until the eve of the MacPherson Inquiry five years after the murder.
72. Part of a journalist's role is to hold public services like the police to account. Less access to police officers, less information, less co-operation and more control by press officers, more hostility and suspicion between police and the media makes that task extremely difficult. Ultimately, everyone loses – particularly the public. In the 1970s, the then Commissioner Sir Robert Mark

urged his officers to be "sympathetic and flexible" in their dealings with the media. In an official memo, quoted by Duncan Campbell on 4 January 2012 in The Guardian, he accepted the policy would involve "risks, disappointments and anxieties but officers who act and speak in good faith may be assured of my support even if they make errors of judgment."

73. Curbs on contact between police and the media as recommended by the HMIC and Filkin reports should be resisted. Police officers, particularly CID officers of detective inspector rank and above, should be able to speak freely with journalists. Common sense and experience should be the guide to the way the relationships work.

### **The Crime Reporters Association**

74. The Crime Reporters Association was formed in 1945 with the aim of maintaining and improving relations with the MPS – principally murder squad detectives who, at the time, investigated suspicious deaths in many parts of England and Wales. Today, the CRA still exists to maintain and improve relations with the police. As so much crime happens in the capital, crime reporters mostly work on Metropolitan Police-related stories. But we do have meetings with other forces including Surrey, City of London, Thames Valley and Kent. We also have regular meetings with the Association of Chief Police Officers.
75. In practice, the CRA has briefings from police officers about investigations into specific crimes – for instance murders, terrorist attacks, serial sex offenders. Less often, we have briefings on more general topics like cyber crime. All CRA briefings are organised through press officers.
76. Membership of the CRA is open to national newspaper broadcast reporters and the London Evening Standard. In almost all cases, CRA membership is automatic to crime reporters or home affairs reporters who report regularly on crime stories. This is roughly comparable to lobby correspondents system in Parliament.

77. In the past, the CRA has occasionally organised lunches for senior MPS officers at which three or four members are present. The senior officer is always accompanied by a press officer. As mentioned above, these functions have ceased since the resignations of last summer.
78. We normally host one social event a year to which the Commissioner, senior MPS officers and senior officers from other forces along with their press teams are always invited.

**STATEMENT OF TRUTH**

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true.

**John Joseph Donald Twomey**  
**Dated: 8 February 2012**

**IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY**